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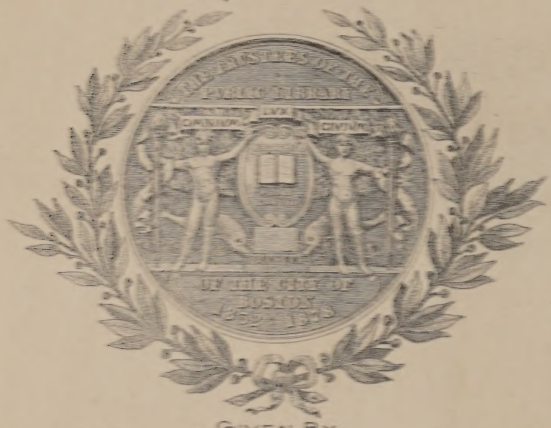

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LAND TENURE AMONG THE NEGROES.

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A PAPER BY

PITT DILLINGHAM.

[From the *Yale Review*, August, 1896.]

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ESTATE OF ABRAM E. CUTTER,
AUG. 10, 1907.

CUTTER

LAND TENURE AMONG THE NEGROES.

LAND tenure is giving way to wage-earning among the Russian peasants—it is reported. Emancipation did not emancipate. The new free contract man had neither capital nor skill. But in particular his holding is extremely small, and his tax is extremely large. So an agricultural proletariat promises to bring a new agrarian problem to Russia.

It has been recently announced[1] that a similar tendency exists nearer home—the Negroes of the South are turning from land tenure to wage-earning. Not on the plantations. The movement is from the plantations to the mines and still more to the towns. One million negroes are already in the towns of the South above 4,000 in population, and this, it is predicted, is the first long step on the way to the cities of the North. A vast urban proletariat is about to be created. The Black Belt is to be vacated. The black emigrant will pass out, and the white immigrant will come in. This through no compulsion. The black tenant farmer is a failure. He seeks to better his condition. He is capable only of mere muscle work. The mines want him, and still more the cities want him. Hence the North wants him, for in the North are the great cities. The line of least resistance for the colored man lies away from the plantations, partly for social but mainly for economic reasons. Thus by a voluntary and economic displacement and diffusion of the Negro the race problem of the South will be solved, and a new agricultural black belt will be secured. No new race problem will be given to the North, because in no one place is the Negro likely to reach a dominant per cent. The Negro in anything under twelve per cent. diffusion will create no race difficulty. Moreover, the Negro is best levelled up industrially and otherwise when he has the maximum of contact with the white man's higher standards. So this change is best not

[1] An Unaided Solution of the Race Question, *Forum*, May, 1896—A. A. Van de Graaff.

only for the South but for the Negro and for the entire country; and the only thing required is "*laissez faire.*"

All this takes the breath a bit, it must be confessed, and the more so because, whether probable or not, it is at least a matter of possible experience. The old race solutions are not, but there is no bridge to Africa here or territorial reservation scheme. It is extremely intelligent and modern talk, and based on United States census statistics of 1890. It is simply in its idea an application of the American plan for the assimilation of any given race, viz., diffusion and contact versus isolated colony life either in town or country.

A tremendous incidental, however, occurs in that this twelve per cent. diffusion theory is not an equal distribution in this case, but brings in the old elimination of the Negro from the South after all. And it is a kind of elimination, though self-administered, which involves nothing less than the landing of the Black Belt and Mississippi Bottom in the towns of the North and West.

Mr. Van de Graaff must forgive us if we say this has an ominous sound, not because of Northern prejudice but simply because—well it is entirely unnecessary to say why. The existence of unassimilated races bringing cheap, unskilled labor and low standards of living is already the special Sphinx in American cities.

It seems a trifle cruel, when a restriction of immigration bill is pending in Congress and we are thinking of taking a bit of rest behind this dike placed along the shores of both oceans—to have this domestic inundation announced, and as a last touch of irony announced as something which should add to the gaiety of the nation, being a good thing for all concerned.

No less than two axioms of the present American mind are thus interfered with. Not only is the city under sufficient strain without further influx of unskilled labor—but we think that the farmer, if he knows when he is well off, will stick to the land, and in this thought we include the black farmer with the white farmer. It is sufficiently annoying to hear that tenant farming is on the increase in the United States. To hear that a large group of farmers (millions) are

likely to become agricultural laborers would be serious enough—for anyone we mean who simply has the well-being of that group in mind. But to be told that for their economic salvation, such a group is to become urban cheap labor, reminds one a little of John Wesley's reply to Whitefield: "There is only one difference between us—what you call God I call devil."

However, it is a minor matter after all whether we can or cannot share the optimism of a given position. We must at any rate take care not to deny the facts, so far as they are facts, on which the position is based.

The fortunate thing in the present case is that we can admit all the facts and still keep a cheerful frame of mind. This is no place to do justice to Mr. Van de Graaff's suggestive and original statistical work based on the county instead of the State as a territorial unit. We may admit, however, in passing, the main results of this work. Such as the great size of the so-called "white man's country" in the "Upland South" and in the new "Western South"—the increasing mobility of the Negro population—the presence of a million of them in the Southern cities above 4,000 in population—the employment of many in the mining region —the significant change of black majority to white majority counties in many cases—a considerable influx into Pennsylvania and other parts of the North and West, and a gain since 1860 of three per cent. in the proportion of colored people north of the Mason and Dixon's line—and yet find nothing strange or unpromising in it all. It is a long way—a very far "shout" from such facts to a race migration with complete change of soil, climate and occupation.

The movement is not bad surely so far as it springs from the new and diversified industrial opportunity which attracts the plantation hand. To suppose the Negro is to remain standing exclusively in the cotton field where emancipation found him; that the plantation population is to remain stagnant—is to take no part in the development of the New South, is supposing a good deal. The more even distribution of himself in the South by the Negro is extremely favorable. Under the simple law of competition, to mention

respectfully the god of *laissez faire*, it is surely desirable to have mobility of labor up to a certain limit for the relief of gluts and congested districts. Meanwhile some six millions or more remain on the plantations, a very considerable group.

But now for the root of the trouble, the Negro's failure as a farmer, his incapacity for intelligent farming, which is driving him from the fields, making him seek a better market for his mere muscle labor, which must be thoroughly supervised or "foremanized" to be of use.

It will be well to go slowly just here, if the old question is being raised as to the intellectual capacity of the Negro under the new heading of Industrial Capacity. This is a question which is taking care of itself, and is being met to-day by facts rather than by either Northern or Southern abstractions—facts which may accumulate slowly, but are accumulating surely.

Mr. Van de Graaff's concern is two-fold—the Negro fails in farming, and the best farming region of the South suffers—the soil suffers as much as the man. Both should have relief by change of partners. The extreme poverty of the Negro in the Black Belt is dwelt upon, and the fact that the present tenant system of land tenure is more wasteful and destructive than ever slavery was. Probably both of these statements are true, and they call for some thought by those who happen to be interested at once in the race question and in the land and labor questions of the South.

It is not so hard, however, to account for the present conditions. The real question is as to the way out. Some of the readers of this article may be disposed to glance at these two matters, with which they are more or less familiar—the existing condition in the Black Belt, and the way out.

We shall complain of no one who affirms that the existing condition is quite too bad to last, that neither land nor man can endure it much longer. If the black tenant farmer of the cotton region had simply himself to thank for all the trouble he and his acres are in, perhaps the experiment of moving off the land would be in order. Things are mixed, however, in this world, and the Negro is the victim of something besides his own ignorance.

To begin with, he is a farmer and he shares in the previous mistakes and the present depression of farming in the United States—the day of low prices and small margins. Seven-cent cotton is as bad as fifty-cent wheat, and he has known five-cent cotton of late, which means getting below the life line. It looks to the alarmist at times as if all the farmers were coming to town, abandoning their mortgaged farms, failing to keep their sons and daughters interested in the fundamental occupation of agriculture. The present uprising in the West and South shows suffering which has become impatient. The silver fly sits on the axle of this chariot and says as of old, "What a dust I do make!" The ground-wave of discontent is the thing to be reckoned with ultimately.

But again and in particular the black tenant farmer is a part of the South. His ills are simply the ills of the Southern farmer in aggravated form. He is charged with "land butchery" and "eggs all in one basket," but this is an old story outside the cotton region, and it is a commonplace to say that slavery as an economic system meant just these two things. Southern white farmers and students of agriculture in the South speak more severely than anyone else of this. Temporary exhaustion of soil was setting in before the war by reason of the "three shift" method, the "chop-down, wear-out, move-away" treatment of land. In other words, by reason of King Cotton and his plantation ways.

Then came the war. The specific industrial effect of it was Peonage—not only "debtor farming" but crop-mortgage farming throughout the South. This system Mr. Van de Graaff declares economically worse than the old slave system for both the man and the land. Economically very bad it certainly is, just as bad as any one pleases to put it, but it was not the invention of the Negro.

Consider just how life went with the emancipated man. The problem quickly became, how to get this new goddess of freedom to bake bread for him. Almost before the shout over his newly-acquired liberty had died on the air, he felt the ancient despotism of the stomach, the pangs of hunger. The old "guarantee of subsistence" was gone and what had

he to do with? Nothing whatever except the unskilled labor of his hands and the right for the first time in his life to make a contract. The government secured for him not even a Russian peasant holding, to say nothing of "forty acres and a mule," or the English laborer's "three acres and a cow." He was, so to speak, in the air. He continued standing on the ground by virtue or grace of the law of gravity, but the ground was economically "from under him," taken up—it belonged to another man, in this new and strange world of private property and the competitive struggle for existence. Supposing him to have had land, however, he had no plow to "break it up" with. Supposing the plow to be there, there was no mule to pull the plow—or seed to drop if the furrow had been opened—or hoe to "chop" with, if cotton and corn had sprung up—or bag or basket to "pick" into, if the bolls of his money crop had opened. And then here was the pinch after all—any saleable product of his labor was months away, as far away as the next harvest time. Meanwhile how about "bread and meat" (meat means pork) for himself and wife and children, to say nothing of fodder for the mule or of shelter and clothing for family.

The former master was but little better off than his old hand in many cases. The slave was gone—the land was left, he was land-poor and he could mortgage only his next crop. The old double security of crop and slave was gone.

So it was that the two, fortunately, master and former slave, began the new era of debtor farming, of crop-lien farming together. The merchant appears as the capitalist for both, furnishing plantation supplies and farm equipment. It is said that the merchant who had speculated in cotton was the only monied man in the South in 1865, and it is also said that the crop-lien has continued to be his "gold mine."

Thus the new agricultural proletariat was not a wage-earning class. The old plantations were broken up into tenancies, and this of necessity. The first step was the share system. The planter furnished cabin, clothing, and food, cow, pig and mule, plow and hoe and seed, while the Negro gave his muscle labor on a certain number of acres and took his pay in his share of the cotton and corn. This share was about

enough to enable him to "pay out" on settlement day to his old master.

There was a gain here for the man, for he had given his labor by free-contract, ceased to be a chattel in the eye of the law. But economically it was hard to see any change for the better. With the coming, therefore, to the more thrifty Negroes of the first bit or working minimum of savings, the share system gave way to the present tenant system.

The entire crop was now mortgaged as security for the money or cotton rent and for the supplies from "the store." The average renter took a "one mule" farm, about thirty acres, the land not being surveyed or "stepped off" but roughly guessed at, and the rent varying with quality and locality from $2.00 to $5.00 an acre—high enough in any event considering the condition of the land and the fact that the only buildings were the one-room log cabin and the corn crib—the corn crib not always.

It is the result of this system which Mr. Van de Graaff deplores, and the results are deplorable—even if one says this is a step up, and under the circumstances it was the only step possible after the war. Still as a stage in the economic evolution of the Negro, it is one to be passed out of as rapidly as may be. Entirely apart from the Negro question, all students of Southern farming recognize the curse of the crop-lien. If the white farmer fails under it, what wonder if the colored farmer fails also!

It is tenancy in its worst form—a short or yearly tenure with no tenant right to improvements, and a credit system involving probably a twenty-five per cent. tax on the farmer's living and equipment, in the shape of prices at "the store." Indeed, in some places this interest on crop-liens runs as high as forty and eighty per cent., even two hundred per cent.—and this last statement is one made by those who are considering the ills of the white farmer in the South, and not any advantage which might be taken of Negroes who can neither read nor keep accounts. "There is no balance at the end of the year—it has gone into the pocket of the merchant." This is said of white farming. As another investigator has

put it, the credit system means three things, high interest, high prices for supplies and low prices for crops—the interest meaning the merchant's risk on one crop, the high prices meaning "careless buying," and a "capital which is turned but once in a year;" the low price for crop meaning its sale in the early autumn by a debtor who must pay back the principal of his debt to the merchant who had advanced it. Later on the middle-man gets the higher price for cotton.

So it comes about that both white and black farmers are "jealous even to hatred" of the merchant who has simply used "business prudence." For the merchant is not a capitalist investor. He must have his principal back to reinvest in supplies to be retailed to the farmers the next year.

It is difficult indeed to get at the bottom of this credit system. Senator Morgan of Alabama has affirmed, in the *Arena* for November, 1895, that eighty per cent. of all the productions of the South are mortgaged to the commercial classes before they are produced. So there are other producers in the same boat with the farmer.

We may note, then, just here that the cry "farm buildings run down, land impoverished, and no longer the old profit" is a cry coming from various sections of the South, and has no color line in it.

Doubtless the curse of the system falls most heavily upon the colored farmer (how heavily we will not attempt here to say), for he is the smallest tenant and, in general, the most ignorant and incapable of self-defence.

The black man's mere muscle labor, however, will hardly serve, we see, as an adequate economic scape-goat for the agricultural South. It is one element in the problem, but it is not the whole story.

Let it be said, however, with any emphasis you choose, that the existing land tenure by crop-lien is too bad to last—neither the man nor the soil can endure it much longer.

Mr. Van de Graaff marks the impending change. He marks the "gullied" and "washed" and "worn out" cotton fields, still scratched skin deep annually by a before-the-war plow—he sees this plow go "round the plum bush if a plum bush has sprung up"—he knows the "quilting-frame" cows

which give a goat's mess and the razor-backed pigs—the old slave cabin with its "dirt chimney" out of repair. He marks a growing restlessness, a discontent, as year after year the colored farmer just succeeds in "paying out" after cotton picking. Probably ninety per cent. of these colored farmers on the average find the balance at the store against them.

He marks, I say, these signs of crisis. The only point to argue is the direction of the change. We are glad it is believed that the Negro is bright enough to want to better his condition. Too many of them, alas! even now are contented if they can pledge the next crop—find a man to "go on"—buy more meat and corn, snuff and cheap jewelry, on the strength of the new mortgage and waive-note.

This is, however, only the more indolent and "low down" part of the community. It is true that the larger and all the better part are ready and more than ready for a change.

What, now, is this change to be, and how is it to be brought about? In short, is there a "way out?"

Mining and urban proletariat in the North, says one. Agricultural proletariat in the South, say a great many more. Small farm-owning, say and hope others.

All are agreed, however, that the South is not to remain agriculturally an undeveloped country. The existing condition is simply the specific product of the war and of emancipated slave labor at its first remove from slavery. The New South is coming, and the farming region, which is the major part of it, has resources almost as much untouched to-day as were the coal and iron deposits of the mountain region before the war.

Moreover, it is claimed that the South contains the richest farming land of the country. Its soil, though worn by excessive cotton cropping, is still fertile under any proper treatment, and can be built up into more than average fertility. Its climate is such as to make crop failure impossible, in the starvation sense, its long season making two field crops and three garden crops possible annually.

It is also largely agreed that the old wholesale farming is not to be the farming of the future. The big plantations

will vanish before the small farm, owned by the small farmer, who will understand feeding the land and diversifying and rotating the crops as well as modern methods of cultivating them.

Doubtless the old *régime* will die hard. The habits of a generation count for something. Mere cotton raising and the credit system go together and tend to perpetuate each other. The farmer is poor and must have credit; the merchant is prudent and must have cotton, for cotton is the money crop of the South.

In some instances the merchant finds it difficult to secure the making of the cotton by the more thriftless tenants, enough to pay for the "supplies" drawn from the store. If he happens, as often, to be a land owner as well as merchant, he has to supervise the labor and send out, not the old overseer with the lash, but the so-called "rider," who threatens to cut off supplies if cotton is not forthcoming.

The abuse of this power is easily seen to be possible. The merchant is by many held responsible for forcing the vice of the existing system, and so discouraging the new agriculture and glutting the market with cotton.

However, experience teaches. The credit system, or crop-lien system, is its own undoing. Land and people at length cry out, and in the new rebellion the colored tenant will do his share of the fighting. For in this first remove from slavery he has learned two things. At the expense of the land he has learned something of farming; he is at least better fitted to manage a farm of his own than he was in 1865. And with this increase of intelligence has grown his discontent with the existing handicap—not to say chain and whip—of the crop-mortgage serfdom. He feels that he is held, bound and scourged by it. Naturally enough, therefore, it will be hard to leave him out altogether from the coming change—to prevent his coming in for a share, at least, of the new farm-and-home-owning.

Three opinions are of interest just here. One is that the immigrant from the Northwest will own the small farms of the cotton belt. Another is that the Southern white tenant will step into ownership first and shut the colored farmer

out, though sharing with the immigrant. Finally, there is the belief that the colored farmer will, as stated above, come in for his share with the others under the new tenure of land.

Really it is a question of PROPORTION, for at this moment the three men may be seen stepping into farm and home-ownership. The immigrant with superior German and Scandinavian economic instinct is coming, and his thrift and industry are a needed revelation. Here and there a Southern white tenant is emancipating himself, and here and there the colored tenant is doing the same thing. The practical question, then, for the colored people of the cotton belt is: Which shall it be, farm ownership, or agricultural coolie labor?

The State of Alabama recently issued an invitation to immigrants. It spoke kindly of the Negro as not so bad to live near as the white immigrant might imagine, as "doing well" and "improving" on the whole. It then added, here is an "unparalleled chance" to own land and secure the most tractable and cheapest labor in the country.

Here we doubtless have a general Southern opinion. It is several removes better than the elimination and urban proletariat business.

And from it it appears the South still wants the Negro industrially as agricultural wage labor in building up the coming South; does not think the exigency of the race question should empty the Black Belt—his old home and present familiar environment, or make him change a friendly for a harsher climate on peril of starvation.

We may say just here that at the present moment wage labor does exist to some extent among the Negroes, in some sections to the extent of twenty-five per cent. on the large plantations, and there is considerable wage labor during cotton-picking. This wage-earner gets on an average $10.00 a month and "finds himself" except in cotton harvest time, when 40 cents a hundred pounds is paid. The wife who combines house and field work and so helps her husband in "bruising along" is expected to pick something like 150 pounds a day—or 60 cents worth. The exceptional man can pick 300 pounds, the average man 175 pounds, or less than

80 cents worth. But the monthly wage-earner on the big plantation where the planter furnishes all the supplies, and without process of law in some cases takes care as in the old days of all the "fighting, cutting and stealing"—this wage-earner with his average of 40 cents a day and "find himself" gets little more than the mere subsistence, about the old rations—3½ pounds of bacon a week, the "peck o' meal" and the "pint o' syrup." Hoe-cake (meal and water) from the ashes or the skillet and spread with molasses makes the chief of the diet; a dark leaky cabin and ragged clothes for self and family complete the picture.

If the problem were one simply of the black man's intelligence, we might ask here why the white planter can pay no higher wages.

Wage-earning exists, then, to a limited extent, but it has few attractions, and the dream of the wage-earner is to become at least a renter and find a merchant to "go on" next year.

In other words, the colored farmer has not yet made up his mind to simply help the emigrant white farmer from the Northwest by becoming agricultural coolie labor.

What, now, is the evidence, it may be asked, of this last point—that the colored tenant sees the "way out." Among other things how much private property, how much farm property has the colored man already?

The evidence as to this last point is not the subject of this paper and can be touched upon only incidentally in closing.

Statistical proof in any strict sense is impossible. All the more so because the United States Government has not yet seen fit to order an investigation by the Labor Bureau and ascertain the economic whereabouts of its new citizen. We have rough estimates by individuals and here and there more careful work.

As a sample of this more careful work I will cite, by permission of Mr. T. C. Walker, of Gloucester Court House, Virginia, a statement prepared by him and by Mr. F. M. Fitch, for the Graduates' Conference of May 1896, in connection with Commencement week at Hampton Institute. Mr. Walker and Mr. Fitch are both Hampton graduates, and Mr. Walker is a member of the Gloucester County bar. The

table shows what has happened in thirty years in one Congressional District in Virginia.

Counties.	Total Acreage.	Owned by Negroes.	Real Valuation.	Improvements.	Personal Property.
Accomace	243,943	5,404	61,706	29,845	81,290
Caroline	313,849	10,771	83,930	45,278	52,986
Essex	147,154	14,037	49,905	17,597	43,293
Gloucester	126,168	12,978	57,557	55,775	60,333
King and Queen	173,588	20,344	59,208	11,753	58,910
Lancaster	71,666	8,378	45,566	29,208	50,260
Matthews	51,471	2,122	12,646	21,825	12,989
Middlesex	71,005	10,541	43,579	31,600	49,843
Northampton	104,189	3,254	27,815	35,926	44,729
Northumberland	109,865	7,465	33,827	19,678	25,943
Richmond	111,045	7,406	29,479	14,625	25,387
Spottsylvania	241,495	13,839	48,680	17,713	26,854
Westmoreland	178,921	9,058	39,650	12,100	37,147
	1,944,359	125,597	593,548	342,920	569,973

It will be seen that about one-fifteenth of the acreage, or 125,597 acres, is owned by the colored people—that the value of this roughly is about $1,000,000, if we include improvements—and that the personal property amounts to over half a million. This report from the First Congressional District of Virginia means farm-owning chiefly, for there is but one city in the District, Fredericksburg. In that town the colored people own in all $79,611 worth of property. Of Gloucester County in particular twenty-five years ago the colored people owned less than 100 acres of land—to-day they own 13,000 acres clear of encumbrance. Mr. Fitch adds: "I have travelled through more than ten counties of Virginia with horse and buggy during the present year. In no county through which I have travelled do the colored people own less than 5000 acres of land, in a few counties visited they own more than 13,000 acres. Much of the improved farming is being done by colored men. The movement to cities is not what it was two years ago. Sentiment against it is growing. The advice of our leading men to the masses is to save, buy homes and settle where they are. More young people are going North than some years ago, but in Halifax County, Virginia, near Paces Station on the Atlantic & Danville R. R., a whole community is settled by those who have

earned their money North with which they purchased their homes. A large per cent. of those who leave their farms for public works expect at some time to return and establish a home. The average man who goes North does not represent the Negro's ambition. He is not of the class of land-owning, industrious citizens who in spite of discriminations and discouragements have accumulated property."

All this is enough to indicate tendency, and it hardly falls in with the *Forum* article opinion that the Negro to no appreciable extent is getting land or wants to get it.

But things are better in Virginia than in the Black Belt along the Gulf coast. As far back as 1888, however, the tax assessments of Georgia showed a total valuation of $340,000,000.00, of which $9,000,000.00 were owned by Negroes. No other State ascertains similar facts, and we do not know here the proportion of farm property. But once again it is sufficient to help indicate a tendency. Gen. S. C. Armstrong's estimate in 1889 was as follows: "The total property of the Negroes in the ex-slave States is probably not far from $80,000,000.00."

This estimate must be carried higher for to-day, as is shown by the recent very valuable symposium on the Negro question published in part in the New York *Sun* for April 14, 1896. This symposium, containing the estimates of leading colored men of all States of the South, was brought about by the indefatigable activity of Mr. Thos. T. Fortune, the editor of a leading Afro-American paper, the New York *Age*.

Not only will it be seen that Gen. Armstrong's estimate of $80,000,000 must be increased, but it will also be seen that a new labor crisis is presenting itself to the Negroes of the South. In one word, the industrial opportunity of the South threatens to narrow itself, shutting the colored man in exclusively to agricultural labor. The Labor Unions are discriminating against them. Trade Schools must exert themselves if the colored man is to keep any place as an artisan.

To return to the matter in hand, let us contrast in particular the reports from such a State as Virginia with a State

like Alabama. The annual Negro Farmers' Conference held every spring at Tuskegee, Ala., and originated with Mr. Booker T. Washington, is now a familiar source of authority to all students of the Negro question. While no accurate statistics in the scientific sense come as yet from this quarter, yet a very clear revelation has been made of an increasing movement in the direction of land-owning in many parts of the Black Belt and even in some of the poorest counties of Alabama, and every one knows what Tuskegee is doing to forward the movement.

Finally let one of these poorest counties be taken as a type. Gloucester County, Virginia, already referred to, is perhaps the banner county of the ex-slave States. Here is the maximum of progress. Lowndes County, Ala., represents an opposite condition. Nowhere are the Negroes more ignorant or more poverty-struck. The total population of the county is 32,000—28,000 of these are colored people. And of the 32,000 in the county 30,000 are on the plantations. In the town of Calhoun of this county the writer in a two years' experience has, with other members of the Calhoun Settlement, seen crop-mortgage farming at its worst in its effect on both land and people. Yet the way out exists and is being used even here. The colored farmers of Calhoun have formed a land company and both co-operative and individual buying of land has begun. Improved methods of farming are appearing, and the agricultural gospel of the "way out" is spreading and deepening its hold. This gospel is "subsistence or food crop first, and surplus or money crop second." In other words, get your supplies out of the soil and not from over the counter, not by means of the waive-note which "sops out the plate;" use your consequent savings on cotton to buy the small holding you now rent. The average holding is 30 acres—the rent $100—with land for sale at from $5 to $10 an acre. Three years' rent will buy a farm and home. With the crop-lien curse will go the one-room cabin curse and the suicidal starving of the land you do not own and have no tenant right to improvements on.

A last word. If Lowndes County can see and use the

way out to an appreciable degree, why suppose any part of the Black Belt to be doomed to coolie labor? The Calhoun Settlement indeed and all industrial education schools in the South stand not, however, for the easy optimism of *laissez faire.* They cannot claim to report what the poorest and most ignorant Negroes will do if "let alone."

There is to be sure a self-made Negro farmer appearing who, if need be, puts on the harness while his wife holds the plow. He represents the old pioneer day thrift and sacrifice. But he is not the average man. Without some slight lift under the arms, it may be that the average black swimmer in this new competitive sea will not keep his head above water. Hampton, Tuskegee, Calhoun and similar institutions stand for active interference by agricultural education and indeed by all-round education. They stand for the neighborly levelling-up contact of the two races as essential to progress.

If, however, private property—and this in the shape of small farms—is as important a motive power as it seems to be in the Black Belt, probably the philanthropy of the North and the States of the South will be justified in developing still further their present profound interest in industrial education.

For the industrial democracy to come, illiteracy is not solved by teaching letters, even as far as the three R's. But this is not the place to speak of agricultural education in an elementary form with a field and garden for every country school-house in the land. Ireland and Austria are ahead of us at the present moment, but we expect everything sooner or later of our own people. And there is reason to believe that the Southern States in particular will put a special emphasis on industrial education in the not far future just because of their Black Belt problem. Meanwhile individual philanthropy and advanced thought is increasingly throwing itself into the gap.

At any rate it is difficult to exaggerate the promise of land-owning as a means of grace to the plantation Negro. It stands next to the discovery to him of the Bible as a book of righteousness versus voodooism. Land-owning, or the chance to own, seems to give instant and regenerating inter-

est to a stagnant life. It pulls the individual together for a struggle which means self-help, self-control and a consequent self-respect. It brings the home into play as a motive power —a true race pride—a true New South pride and a new attachment to the nation's flag as meaning the new justice—a chance for the poorest. It helps finally to bring into the life the power of a new understanding of, and a new veneration for Christendom's Cross—as meaning not only the good of a Heaven to come, but a taste of Heaven here and now.

Which shall it be, then, the agricultural coolie, or the home-owning, tax-paying and ten-commandment-keeping small farmer—farming not for a fortune, but for that "living" which conditions "life"—which makes, it may be, a quite God-ordained and indispensable property basis for character, for both personal and social morality to the "brother in black," who in the new era has to overcome the former vices of a propertyless condition.

General Armstrong used to say:—

"There is much evidence on the other side—but the balance is right. We have a right to our enthusiasm."

PITT DILLINGHAM.

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